

**MINUTES OF REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

**Caucus Room, Belize City Council**

**10:00 a.m.**

**October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023**

Present at the meeting were the following:

- |                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Mr. Bernard Wagner      | <b>Mayor</b>        |
| 2. Mr. Allan Pollard Jr.   | <b>Deputy Mayor</b> |
| 3. Ms. Natasha Pipersburgh | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 4. Ms. Kaya Cattouse       | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 5. Mr. Michael Novelo      | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 6. Mr. Edmund Kwan         | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 7. Mr. Javier Castellanos  | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 8. Mrs. Stephanie Hamilton | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 9. Mr. Albert Vaughan      | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 10. Mr. Micah Goodin       | <b>Councillor</b>   |
| 11. Ms. Deannie Requena    | <b>Councillor</b>   |

Mrs. Stephanie Lindo-Garbutt

Mr. Eluide Miller

**City Administrator**

**Manager, Office of the Mayor**

**Mayor Wagner called the meeting to order at 10:24 AM.**

### **1.0 Belize National Prayer**

Councillor Albert Vaughan led all who were present in reciting the National Prayer of Belize.

**DEPUTY MAYOR ALLAN POLLARD JR. ARRIVED TO THE MEETING AT 10:29 a.m.**

### **2.0 Welcome Remarks**

2.1 Mayor Wagner expressed gratitude to the punctual council members who were ready to conduct the business of the people.

### **3.0 Ratification of the June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes**

3.1 (2.4) Change “them” to “the Council”.

3.2 (13.6) Fix spelling of “deferred”.

3.3 (13.7) Change the statement to the following, “Furthermore, Deputy Mayor Pollard advised caution, suggesting that the Council should strategically implement the taxi rollout to prevent any backlash from the Association.”

3.4 (14.2) Change from March 2023 to March 2024.

3.5 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. moved for the minutes to be accepted. Seconded by Councilor Novelo.

### **4.0 Matters Arising from the Minutes**

**COUNCILOR REQUEÑA ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 10:41 a.m.**

4.1 (4.17) - Councilor Vaughan mentioned that NICH had approached UB, which agreed to the placement of the statue on its compound. Nevertheless, the Indian Community opposes its presence there. Currently, the statue is situated in Belmopan.

**COUNCILOR KWAN ARRIVED AT THE MEETING AT 10:44 A.M.**

4.2 The Mayor conveyed that the Council, in collaboration with Belize Signs, was actively engaged in repairing the traffic lights at the intersection of Vernon Street and the Central American Boulevard. Seeking clarification, he requested the City Administrator to specify whether the repairs were carried out by the Belize City Council or the Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing.

4.3 The City Administrator explained that Belize Signs initially received approval from the Council to proceed with the repairs. However, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Housing intervened and completed the repair. Initially, the lights were functional, but after another accident, they were damaged, resulting in their misalignment. Ultimately, it was the Ministry that undertook the repair work.

4.4 (13.3) - The Mayor asked for an update regarding the lease agreement between the Belize City Council and the Belize Tourism Board (BTB). This lease was intended to cover the community shed, measuring 20'-0" x 14'-10", designated for commercial use at the base of the Swing Bridge, spanning a period of five (5) years.

4.5 The City Administrator mentioned that the lease agreement hasn't been drafted for signing yet. However, she noted that Ms. Patnett has requested figures from the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) regarding their investment. These figures are intended to be included in the offset for the lease.

4.6 (14.2) - The City Administrator updated the Council about a meeting involving the Enforcement Manager, herself, and representatives from the Council's administrative team with Mr. Longsworth of Ranger Security & Surveillance Limited. During the meeting, the Council communicated its decision, and concerns regarding the quality of services provided by the company were discussed, ensuring Mr. Longsworth was made aware of the Council's stance.

## 5.0 Announcements by the Mayor

5.1 Mayor Wagner expressed gratitude to the National Celebrations Commission (NCC), under the leadership of Hon. Francis Fonseca, and Councilor Albert Vaughan for their efforts in spearheading the September celebrations. He commended their work, noting that the celebrations were notably successful due to the increased participation and collaborative efforts of various entities involved.

5.2 Mayor Wagner commended Councilor Kwan for overseeing the recent Cohorts of the Belize City Accelerator Program, celebrating their receipt of certifications and equipment vital for supporting their individual business ventures. He proudly announced that a total of 140 business owners had benefited from this impactful program.

Additionally, Mayor Wagner highlighted the 10th Bram organized by the Belize City Council, noting its impressive attendance, along with the successful Independence Day Bash hosted by the Council. He commended the Public Relations Team for their instrumental role in orchestrating these events and ensuring their triumph.

The mayor also mentioned the Council's participation in the Annual Expo organized by the Chamber of Commerce, where he was part of the opening ceremony. He acknowledged the event's ongoing success and the Council's active involvement in contributing to its achievements.

5.3 Mayor Wagner announced the upcoming inauguration of the Yarborough Pumping Station, extending an invitation to all Council members to attend the event. Stressing the significance of continuous supervision at the site, he emphasized the crucial role it plays in ensuring the safety of the children in the vicinity.

Having personally witnessed the pumping station in action, Mayor Wagner expressed admiration for its remarkable power and effectiveness, highlighting its vital role in the community.

5.4 The City Administrator explained that although MIDH will maintain control of the station for a year due to a few pending components, the Council has employed a young engineer who will closely observe the project to gain comprehensive knowledge. While MIDH retains control, the City Administrator highlighted the need for security from MIDH's side.

5.5 Mayor Wagner announced the impending Anniversary Downtown Super Sale and highlighted a special discount to be offered on that day: a 20% discount on outstanding arrears.

5.6 Mayor Wagner mentioned his scheduled trip to Panama on October 21, 2023, to attend a conference hosted by the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate Change (GCoM). Additionally, he disclosed plans to travel to Miami alongside the Prime Minister and Hon. Mahler for a high-level meeting with cruise lines.

**COUNCILOR GOODIN JOINED THE MEETING AT 11:07 A.M.**

**6.0 General Updates from the City Administrator**

6.1 The City Administrator provided an update on compliance rates, indicating a Property Tax compliance of 69% for the current year, slightly below the usual 75% but close to the yearly target. Trade License payments showed a high compliance rate of 90%, while Traffic-related payments compliance stood impressively at 96%.

6.1 The City Administrator conveyed that the Council is currently in the budgeting phase and encouraged each Council member to engage with their respective managers. This interaction aims to share individual visions, ensuring these aspirations are considered and budgeted for in the upcoming financial plans.

6.2 The City Administrator informed that the Council has achieved over 80% completion, with more than 70 streets out of the initial 90-street target accomplished. The new goal has been raised to 140 streets. Currently, work is underway on 21 streets, while 39 streets remain pending for future action.

6.3 Mayor Wagner inquired about the status of the streets in Kings Park that had been prepared for chip sealing after being ripped and prepped.

6.4 The City Administrator explained that the streets in question require re-preparation before the sealing process can proceed. Fast Construction is providing a quote for this necessary work. This approach is deemed necessary due to several pieces of equipment being out of commission, including the new grader, which is missing two bolts. The dealer has been contacted to replace these bolts and conduct maintenance on the grader. The City Administrator expressed frustration, attributing the situation to negligence on the part of the operators. They emphasized the importance of conducting inspections before and after every use of the equipment, which has been reiterated as a directive.

6.5 The Mayor mentioned speaking with Mr. Gibson (Vehicle Care Coordinator) on Friday, who highlighted that he submits a weekly report detailing the number of vehicles that are out of commission. He expressed a feeling of inadequate support when requesting parts for repairs and maintenance.

6.6 The City Administrator clarified that the report requested from Mr. Gibson was only submitted after he received a final warning to provide it.

6.7 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed agreement, stating that the missing bolts are not the kind of issue that could go unnoticed, leading him to share the belief that it is a case of negligence.

6.8 Councilor Novelo supported Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr.'s sentiments, echoing the belief regarding negligence. Additionally, Councilor Cattouse emphasized the need for accountability, citing instances where sanitation operations were impacted due to equipment shortages, linking this issue to Mr. Gibson's responsibilities.

6.9 The City Administrator informed the council that Mr. Lennox Leslie is scheduled to join the Council later this month as the new Works Manager. Mr. Leslie had previously worked with the Council but left to pursue higher education.

6.10 The City Administrator shared that the Works Department is undergoing restructuring, dividing into three distinct divisions, which will include segments specifically dedicated to vehicle care and road works, among others.

6.11 The City Administrator also announced the recruitment of another young engineer tasked with overseeing new road construction and park development initiatives. Furthermore, Mr. Menjivar has been promoted to work alongside the City Engineer in his new role as the Assistant City Engineer.

6.12 The City Administrator added that she anticipates having a cost estimate for the Nelly Tucker Park (Gungulung) before the week concludes. She emphasized the Council's proactive approach in swiftly progressing towards the establishment of this park.

6.13 The City Administrator updated that the ten (10) fitness nooks, which were ordered from China, have arrived in the country, and are scheduled to be installed by next week. Additionally, Councilor Pipersburgh, overseeing the Parks and Playgrounds portfolio, will be sharing the proposed locations for these fitness nooks, detailing the ten sites chosen for their placement.

6.14 The City Administrator informed that works are set to commence this Sunday at the Belize City Council's Parking Lot, often referred to as the "NICH Parking Lot," situated on Regent Street. These renovations will involve resurfacing the lot, erecting a fence, constructing new commercial booths, and implementing various additional elements.

6.15 The City Administrator announced the Pickstock Community Festival scheduled for November 4th, running from 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The event will showcase cultural highlights, local vendors, and various artists from the area. Additionally, plans for upcoming Christmas initiatives were shared, including the annual tree lighting ceremony and additional festivities at Digi Park and Memorial Park.

6.16 The City Administrator outlined the upcoming Christmas events, including a Christmas Mass scheduled for the day before, starting at 6:00 p.m., followed by a staff dinner on Friday. Proposing the council's closure on that day, she expressed confidence that with adequate notice, it could be arranged. The dinner is set to take place at the Civic Center.

Furthermore, she highlighted the dates for key events: Christmas in the Park on December 9th and the Holiday Night Festival on December 15th. Tokens for staff and distributions of hams, turkeys, and pantries to the mayor and councilors were mentioned. She encouraged them to involve their respective area representatives in these activities.

6.17 Mayor Wagner acknowledged the request and mentioned that it would be taken into consideration. Mayor Wagner suggested allocating fifty (50) hams and fifty turkeys for this year's distribution. Additionally, considering the council's final months in the term, he proposed revisiting the possibility of bonuses for the councilors.

6.18 The City Administrator outlined the proposed structure for the upcoming 2024-2025 term regarding property rates: a 10% rate for occupied properties, a 2% rate for unoccupied properties, and a 25% rate for senior citizens' dwellings. They mentioned the pre-payment incentives: a 15% discount for payments made in January 2024, 10% in February, and 5% in March.

6.19 The City Administrator emphasized the need for a decision regarding St. George's Caye and Caye Caulker. Mayor Wagner mentioned that both places have shown interest in managing their property tax collections independently. In previous years, the Council has collected on their behalf and remit the revenues collected to them thereafter.

6.20 Mayor Wagner raised a query about the proposed 25% discount for senior citizens, suggesting the consideration of a higher discount rate for the city's senior population.

6.21 The City Administrator mentioned concerns that the Ministry of Local Government might encounter challenges in accepting this revised proposal.

6.22 Mayor Wagner proposed increasing the discount for senior citizens to 35% and suggested leaving it to the discretion of the Local Government to reject the proposal if deemed necessary.

6.23 The City Administrator informed the council about the pending declarations from the Trade & Liquor Boards for 2024. They recommended reconfiguring the Council's Liquor Board due to the increasing number of legal matters resulting from the board's decisions. The deadline for this declaration is November 15th to ensure its publication in the gazette.

6.24 Mayor Wagner highlighted challenges within the liquor board, noting that the Council had received numerous complaints stemming from decisions made by the board in recent months.

6.25 Councilor Requeña discussed a case involving a business owner in the Lake I Community, revealing that it has led to a lawsuit against the Council. Additionally, there have been concerns raised by residents in the Blue Marlin Drive area regarding another establishment, posing potential challenges for the Council.

**COUNCILOR GOODIN LEFT THE MEETING AT 11:55 A.M.**



## 7. Notices

7.1 Councilor Vaughan expressed concerns about the deteriorating condition of the streets in Belama Phase 4, particularly those surrounding the park. Residents have requested assistance to address these issues and alleviate the poor road conditions in the area.

7.2 Councilor Requeña highlighted a complaint from a resident on Dunn St. regarding the street's deplorable condition following recent weather conditions. The resident has requested temporary upgrades to address and alleviate the issues with the street.

7.3 The City Administrator mentioned that Dunn St. is among the streets designated for re-preparation and chip and sealing by Fast Construction to address its current condition.

## 8. Questions

8.1 No questions were tabled.

## 9. Petitions

9.1 Councilor Kwan presented a petition concerning the unnamed street that connects Holy Emmanuel to the Highway. Residents in that area have expressed concerns about the street's poor condition and are requesting upgrades to address the ongoing issues.

9.2 Mayor Wagner pledged to act by arranging for materials to be placed on the street and committing to its rehabilitation to improve its condition.

9.3 Councilor Kwan presented a petition from Cooking Master Restaurant, expressing their struggle due to the absence of parking spaces outside their establishment. The area was recently designated as a no parking zone following the installation of nearby traffic lights, affecting the restaurant's business.

9.4 Mayor Wagner suggested using Heusner Crescent for parking to address the issue raised by Cooking Master Restaurant. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. indicated that the two lanes are functioning well in that area.

9.5 Councilor Cattouse presented a petition concerning 3rd Street, highlighting issues caused by cars parking along that street near a store. She requested either signage indicating no parking or consideration for converting the street into a two-way thoroughfare. Councilor Vaughan mentioned that this action had been planned after consulting the neighborhood, so Mr. Jenkins could proceed. Additionally, the Area Representative expressed agreement with the proposed changes.

9.6 Councilor Castellanos raised a petition requesting drainage work to be carried out on Nutmeg Street.

## 10. Presentation of Reports from Councillors

10.1 Councilor Vaughan congratulated Mayor Wagner and the Deputy Mayor for progressing with the decision made at the National Party Council. Councilor Vaughan indicated his intent to support the entire team once it's established following the convention, along with his Freetown Committee.

10.2 Councilor Vaughan also brought attention to the Enforcement team, suggesting a review of enforcement officers who aren't sworn in and encouraging their transition into sworn roles. Additionally, he requested information about vacancies within the unit to be shared among Council members to consider filling these positions.

10.3 The City Administrator mentioned the completion of ticket writing and court procedure training for new employees within the Enforcement team. Additionally, they stated that announcements regarding vacancies will continue to be shared among Council members.

10.4 Councilor Cattouse announced the upcoming Triathlon hosted by the Council, scheduled for December 3rd. She highlighted the plan for weekly events, Just Swim and Just Run, to lead up to this significant event. Additionally, Councilor Cattouse provided an update on the recently held Marathon, mentioning a notable increase in participation with one hundred and ten (110) participants, double the usual attendance. She expressed gratitude to Councilors Hamilton and Pipersburgh for their assistance and praised Mr. Miller for finishing in the top ten in the 5k run. Councilor Cattouse also mentioned the anticipated Glow Ride, noting its increasing popularity each year.

10.5 Mayor Wagner praised Councilor Cattouse for her dedicated efforts and mentioned receiving commendations from the Ambassador of Guatemala regarding the city's cleanliness. Consequently, he commended Councilor Cattouse for her role as the Councilor responsible for Sanitation.

10.6 Councilor Novelo reported a scuffle involving a few staff members in the Cemetery Department following the September Celebrations. As a result, one employee was terminated, and another is facing termination. Additionally, Mr. Bernard, who is due to retire at age 55 in a few weeks, has requested special consideration from the mayor to continue working.

10.7 Councilor Vaughan proposed involving prisoners in assisting with the maintenance of the cemetery as a potential solution or support for cemetery upkeep.

10.8 The City Administrator acknowledged being aware of the vacancies within the cemetery department, mentioning that interviews for these positions are scheduled for the upcoming week. Additionally, they noted that applications had been received from Area Representatives, including some from employees of the Sanitation Department.

Regarding the issues faced by the Sanitation Department with equipment, the City Administrator mentioned granting considerable flexibility for the department to address these challenges. They further stated that approvals for rentals and additional fuel have been granted, pending justification for these requests.

10.9 Mayor Wagner expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of a comprehensive plan from the Sanitation Managers to address the citywide cutting issues. He indicated that he would have to create a plan for them if one is not presented soon.

10.10 Councilor Novelo mentioned that Mr. Edwin Swaso, who was previously employed with the council, was affected by the State of Emergency, and was terminated upon his release from jail. The councilor and the Manager are now requesting that Mr. Swaso be reinstated in his former employment.

10.11 Councilor Kwan extended congratulations to Mayor Wagner and Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. for their decision to continue to work together for a greater cause. He then expressed gratitude to the Mayor, the City Administrator, Axiory, and the Taiwanese Embassy in Belize for their contributions to the BCAP (Belize City Accelerator Program) and acknowledged their efforts in making it a reality. Additionally, Councilor Kwan thanked the Local Economic Development Manager for facilitating the success of the program.

10.12 Councilor Requeña shared her experience of being fully funded by the UK to travel to the UK and attend the One Young World Conference. She expressed surprise at the influential positions held by the young professionals from various countries at the conference and mentioned learning a great deal, expressing gratitude for being part of the network.

Councilor Requeña mentioned that due to starting work in Belmopan, she won't be able to physically attend further meetings. She wished the best for those seeking reelection and assured her support for all participants.

10.13 Councilor Castellanos extended congratulations to Mayor Wagner and Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. He expressed his immense pleasure in being part of a Council led by Mayor Wagner. Additionally, he conveyed his intention to seek reelection and eagerly anticipated the opportunity to serve once more for the betterment of Belize City residents.

10.14 Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed gratitude for the encouraging words and stressed the significance of the upcoming municipal elections. He acknowledged the substantial amount of work accomplished by the Council, cautioning that much of this work might be overlooked. Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. appreciated Mayor Wagner's commitment to devising a plan to address the city's bushing situation.

He emphasized the need for a comprehensive evaluation of each department to identify areas where performance could be improved and resolve any shortcomings in the coming months. Additionally, Deputy Mayor Pollard Jr. expressed his intention to meet with the new Works Manager to clearly articulate the Council's expectations.

10.15 The City Administrator mentioned a scheduled management meeting for Friday at 8:00 a.m., emphasizing its significance due to the Council's considerable accomplishments but also highlighting existing gaps. Additionally, the CA praised Mr. Menjivar for effectively managing responsibilities during the City Engineer's absence and acknowledged the extensive workload handled by the Works Department during the September Celebrations.

**COUNCILOR VAUGHAN LEFT THE MEETING AT 1:20 P.M.**

**11.0 Request for leave to move the adjournment of the Council on definite matter of urgent public importance.**

11.1 No matters were tabled.

**12.0 Motions by Councillors**

12.1 Mayor Wagner moved a motion for the approval of a one-day property tax discount of 20% on outstanding arrears on October 28, 2023, to coincide with the Belize City Council's Anniversary Edition Super Sale event. Seconded by Councilor Vaughan. **MOTION APPROVED.**

12.2 Mayor Wagner proposed a motion to approve the renewal of Love FM's contract for promotional services, covering a one-year period from October 28, 2023, to October 27, 2024, with a total cost of \$10,800.00. Seconded by Councilor Requeña. **MOTION APPROVED.**

**13.0 Submissions from the Building Unit – Ms. Carla Patnett, City Planner**

13.1 A request from the Belize Tourism Board to turn a portion of Amandala Drive from Mahogany Street up to Morning Glory Street into a one-way street, and using a portion of the canal side for parking. **MOTION APPROVED.** The Council approved for ten parking spaces to along the canal to be used for parking but the street is to remain a two-way street.

13.2 A request from the Planning Unit for approval of the Mahogany Street vendors leases. **MOTION APPROVED.**

13.3 A request by Mr. Josue Carballo of Change Agent Builders to lease a portion of the reserve at the foot of the Belcan Bridge for parking. **MOTION APPROVED.** A lease is to be prepared for a term of five (5) years.



13.4 A request by Mr. Peter Codd to lease a portion of the reserve on Fort Street across from the San Cas Park for the purpose of establishing a restaurant. **MOTION APPROVED** under the condition that Mr. Codd secures all additional clearances and permits needed.

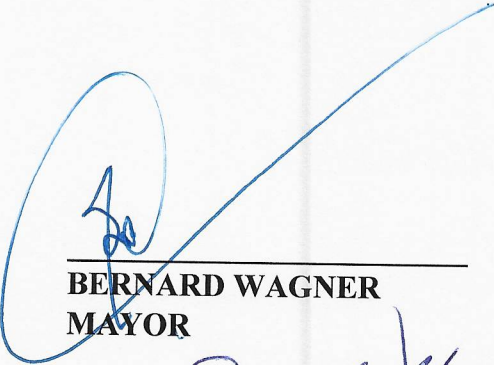
13.5 A request by McKoy Torres LLP to lease a portion of the reserve in front of #30 Newton Barracks for parking for business. **MOTION DENIED** given objections by the Planning Department.

#### 14.0 Other Matters

14.1 No other matters were tabled.

#### 15.0 Adjournment

15.1 Councilor Requeña moved for the meeting to be adjourned. Seconded by Councilor Castellanos. The meeting was adjourned at 1:41 p.m.

  
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**BERNARD WAGNER**  
MAYOR

  
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**STEPHANIE LINDO-GARBUTT**  
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

